

EAST TIMOR UPDATE

Number 23 — June 7, 1993

Xanana: East Timor's Nelson Mandela gets life imprisonment

East Timor's resistance leader, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, has been sentenced to life imprisonment after an Indonesian court found him guilty of rebellion and illegal possession of firearms. The May 21 sentence drew immediate condemnation from around the world and comparisons between Xanana and African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela.

"Like all political trials in East Timor and Indonesia, this one failed to meet international standards of fairness, or even to comply with Indonesia's own Code of Criminal Procedure," noted Amnesty International. Portuguese President Mario Soares declared that "this was a trial organized by a dictatorship and therefore it was a travesty which showed that there is no justice in Indonesia." The Indonesian court, which under international law has no jurisdiction in East Timor, even abused its own process. Most notably, Xanana was prevented from reading a statement in his own defence, which the court called "irrelevant."

Xanana had initially seemed to cooperate with the Indonesian government's case against him. However, his final defence plea declared defiantly: "I am resistance commander Xanana Gusmão, leader of the subere resistance against the cowardly and shameful invasion of the 7 December 1975 and the criminal and illegal occupation of East Timor for the last 17 years.... according to international law, I continue to be, like all Timorese, a Portuguese citizen and before my own conscience I am a citizen of East Timor. It is in these terms that I reject the competence of any Indonesian court to try me, and particularly the jurisdiction of this court which has been imposed by force of arms and crimes against my homeland, East Timor."

Following the verdict, Xanana began a hunger strike to focus international attention on East Timor. He has not been visited by the Red Cross, and supporters are gravely concerned for his health while in prison.

Xanana's court-appointed lawyer has made an appeal for clemency in his client's name to Indonesian president Suharto, an

apparent violation of Xanana's wishes, as expressed in his defence plea.

The government of Canada was one of the few to announce support for the life sentence against Xanana. "We are of the impression that the trial has been run fairly and openly," an External Affairs spokesperson told Southern News. After severe criticism by New Democrat MP Svend Robinson, External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall has agreed to "review" Amnesty International's report on the trial, which describes it as "a travesty of justice."

Red Cross can't see Timorese prisoners

Citing obstruction by Indonesian government officials, the International Committee of the Red Cross has suspended its program of visits to East Timorese political prisoners. ICRC visits are the only thing ensuring the safety of some prisoners, so their suspension puts several prisoners in a serious situation.

"Unfortunately, we had to suspend this programme (of visits) because all the conditions of the ICRC were not met," said spokesperson Pierre Pont. "It is also distressing and upsetting that we cannot carry out our humanitarian task." Pont said the conditions set by the ICRC for access to political prisoners were the same in East Timor as everywhere else in the world: access to all prisoners and all places of detention, interviews with prisoners without witnesses present, and follow-up visits. President Suharto committed the Indonesian government to respect these terms early in May.

ETAN is urging the Canadian government to pressure its Indonesian counterparts to live up to their obligations and allow the ICRC to go about its humanitarian work, with particular regard to the situation of long-term prisoners like Xanana Gusmão. In the long run, Canada should also be working for the release of these prisoners. Letters in support of these goals should be sent to External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall, House of Commons, Ottawa Ont., K1A 0A6, with a copy to Ray Funk MP of Parliamentarians for East Timor at the same address. Both letters are postage free.



CIDA whitewashes Timor genocide in new report

On April 30, the Canadian International Development Agency released its first comprehensive report on Canada's aid programs in East Timor. The report contradicts past statements by CIDA officials that no Canadian money goes to back the Indonesian administration of East Timor, and includes a whitewash of Indonesia's military-dominated regime and its record in East Timor. It refers to "the steadfast leadership of President Suharto" and his government's "prudent economic policies," and describes the invasion of East Timor as "Indonesia fill(ing) the vacuum created by the departure of the European administration."

Most Canadian aid to East Timor is funnelled through the Canada Fund, which is exempted from sanctions on bilateral aid to Indonesia. In 1992-93, the Canada Fund spent \$500,000 to fund 26 small projects in East Timor. Future projects, the report says, will "continue to focus on development at the community level" — a noble-sounding goal, but one which has the net effect of strength-

ening Indonesian control over a territory they occupy in violation of international law. The Timorese resistance movement CNRM has called for a suspension of all aid until East Timor is allowed a referendum on self-determination.

CLC backs Timor

The 2.5 million-member Canadian Labour Congress has blasted the Canadian government for supporting Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. In a statement issued in May after meetings with ETAN/Windsor members, the CLC called on the government of Canada to take a leading role in international efforts to secure East Timor's right to self-determination. "There are an estimated 300 companies present in Indonesia and, with Canadian acquiescence, the international financial institutions continue to ignore the tragic plight of the people of East Timor," the statement said.

The CLC also demanded that aid to Indonesia be tied to respect for human rights, and pledged to work with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to help free East Timor.

East Germans protest warship sale to Indonesia

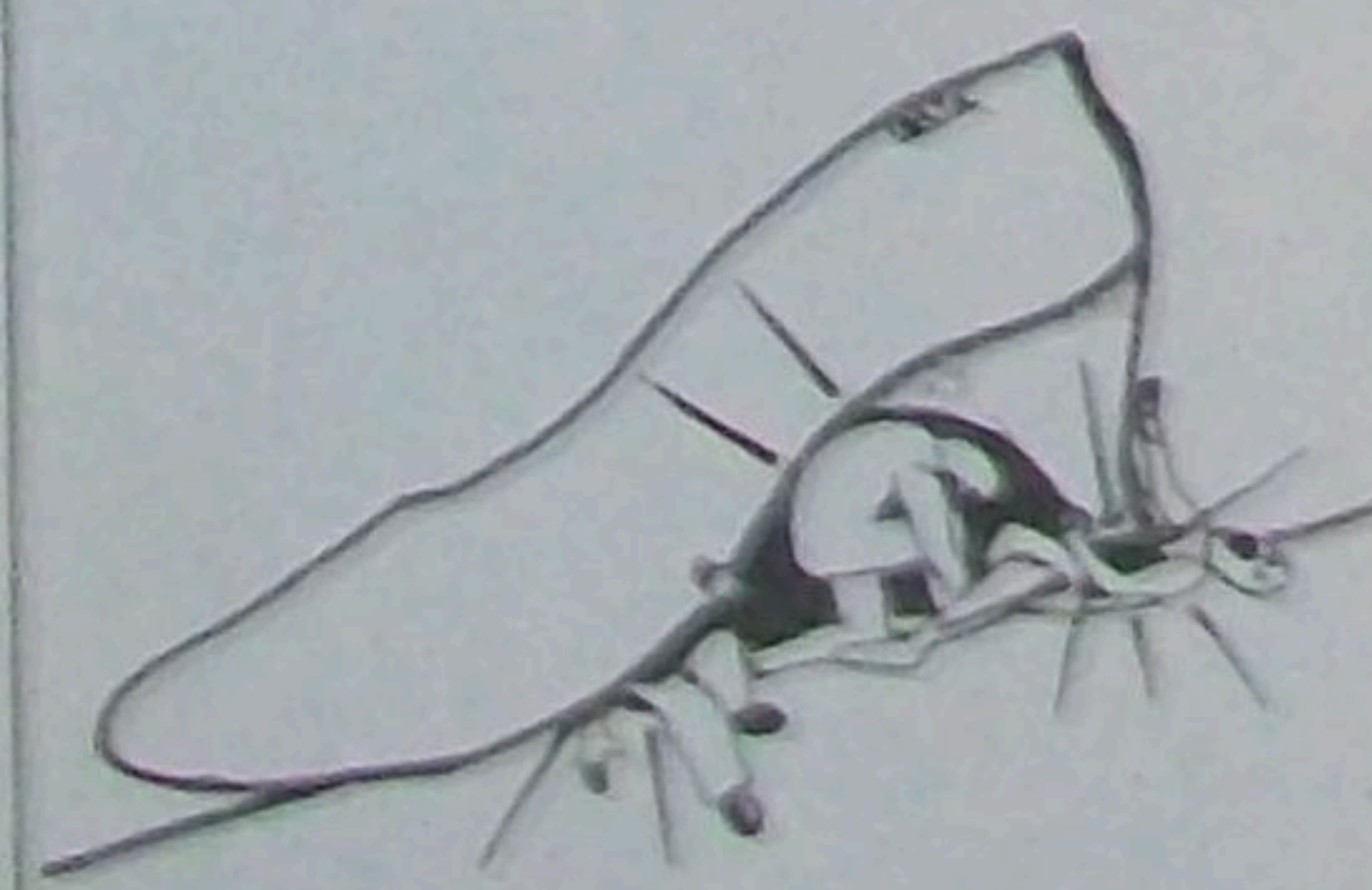
A coalition of peace groups in Germany has launched a direct action campaign to halt the sale of 39 warships from the former East German navy to Indonesia, a sale made in violation of the German government's own guidelines on arms exports and European Community policies supporting East Timor.

Seventy protesters from the East German Peace Movement and Berlin-based Indonesia Watch shut down Peetoomunde harbour, where the ships are docked, on May 28, occupying four corvettes and a landing-ship. "The situation in Indonesia is comparable to the situation in East Germany under the communist regime," said the East German Peace Movement. The plan is to continue the occupation until the German government calls off the sale. According to police, the demonstrators have inflicted damage worth half a million German marks (\$400,000) to electronic equipment on the ships.

**Free East Timor • Free Xanana
Gusmao • Boycott Bata Shoes**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 26 • 2 PM
CITY HALL PEACE GARDEN
(QUEEN & BAY, TORONTO)**

Followed by a walk to Bata Shoes at the Eaton Centre
Donations of old shoes needed!



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